

NEW YORK TIMES  
23 January 1986

## ARMY ONCE BARRED FILES ON MARCOS

A Filipino Opposition Figure  
Sought Papers in '84 but  
Request Was Denied

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22 — More than two years ago, the United States Army barred an opponent of Ferdinand E. Marcos from looking at files of the guerrilla unit said to have been headed by Mr. Marcos in World War II, according to Federal officials.

The officials said the request for the material, made by Dr. Arturo M. Taca, was denied on the ground that it would violate the Philippine President's right to privacy under American law. The officials also said the Army, which had legal custody over the records, expressed fears that release of the documents could strain relations with the Philippines, a strategic ally.

The war record of Mr. Marcos has long been a subject of dispute. A succession of journalists and Filipino opposition leaders have gone to St. Louis in recent years in search of evidence at the National Personnel Records Center. The records center housed many of the Government's documents on Mr. Marcos before they were moved to the National Archives in 1984.

### Seeking to Refute Marcos

Dr. Taca, a Filipino doctor from St. Louis who opposes Mr. Marcos, went to the records center in October 1983, shortly after the assassination of the opposition leader Benigno S. Aquino Jr. He said he was hoping to find records that would prove Mr. Marcos's assertions that he was a war hero and a guerrilla leader were fraudulent.

Dr. Taca said he specifically asked for the Army's investigatory files on the Marcos unit, Ang Mga Maharlika.

Paul D. Gray, the assistant director for military records at the St. Louis center, said the files were found and recognized as sensitive.

"It sent up flags," said Mr. Gray, who recalled that his office immediately asked for guidance from its Washington office and the Army.

Shortly afterward, Mr. Gray said, the Army asked that the documents be withheld, citing several reasons.

The Army said — and the records center agreed — that the Federal Privacy Act should be applied to a foreign national like Mr. Marcos. The law limits disclosure of possibly derogatory information from Federal files without permission of the individual.

Mr. Gray said the Army was also concerned about the possible impact on American relations with Manila.

"There was some concern for the political sensitivity," Mr. Gray said. "We're not ignorant people. We know certain names and situations. We deal with it every day here."

### 'Sounds Very Reasonable'

The archivist of the Army, John H. Hatcher, said he could not recall details about the case. But he confirmed Mr. Gray's account, saying: "That sounds very reasonable. The Army decision was predicated on sensitivity to the Government in Manila."

According to Mr. Hatcher, the Philippine Government had already been consulted about the transfer of the records to the archives and had objected to any release of the rosters of guerrilla groups.

Opposition figures like Dr. Taca contend that Mr. Marcos's guerrillas, if they existed at all, were far smaller than the more than 8,000 he has claimed at various times.

Mr. Hatcher said a sample of the rosters had been passed on by Army intelligence to its Philippine counterparts. "The Government of the Philippines demurred," he said, "We respected their wishes. This is not unusual."

Mr. Hatcher defended the Army's application of the Federal privacy rules to the files on the Maharlika guerrillas. He termed the archives' release of it a "bureaucratic blunder" because more care should have been taken to protect the rights of Mr. Marcos.

But Garry Ryan, head of the Military Archives Division at the National Archives, said each release of material to the public represented a judgment by an archivist on the privacy statute.

Further, he said, the records on the Maharlikas involved an investigation of claims by the unit, not individuals. He also noted that the entire file was declassified by the Army in 1960.

The documents were finally released when a historian, Alfred M. McCoy, uncovered them while researching a book on the Philippines. He said he received the material from a staff archivist who set no restrictions on its use.

"The archivist who made that decision made an honest decision and that's as far as it goes," he said. "It's a tough decision to make, and he made it."